

## 9 Soviet One-Orbit Shots Hint Testing for Warhead Re-Entry

By EVERT CLARK

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16—The mystery of what the Soviet Union is trying to achieve with a series of one-orbit space shots has deepened since the first flight 13 months ago.

Most analysts here now believe the flights are exploring the techniques of bringing down a nuclear warhead from an orbiting platform.

Until recently there had been considerable disagreement about the purpose of the shots. But the analysts believe they have narrowed down the possible explanations.

Nine shots have been fired in the series since Sept. 17, 1966.

At first, Western experts thought the Soviet Union was attempting to disguise the fact of the flights as well as their purpose. Now, however, they believe the Soviet wants the United States to be aware of the flights, but they do not know why.

Ironically, the Soviet tests would not violate the space treaty put into effect in a White House ceremony last week, even if they are military tests of warhead re-entry techniques.

The treaty, signed by 84 nations, prohibits the stationing in orbit of weapons of mass destruction. But it does

not prohibit the engineering tests necessary to learn how to station weapons in orbit and call them down at will on specific targets.

Nor does the treaty prohibit the explosion of conventional weapons in orbit. While the Russians have not done this in the series of nine single-orbit shots, they might eventually want to do so, to stimulate destruction patterns of a nuclear weapon, some observers here believe.

The treaty does not define "outer space." This task was left to later negotiations. But the treaty is clear on the point that an object is not considered to be in outer space unless it remains in orbit.

Thus the payloads sent aloft in the nine Soviet shots, which have been returned to earth before they completed one cir-

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

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The experts here say they will not be certain of the purpose of this test series until some new flight characteristics are exhibited—perhaps a greater number of orbits before re-entry or the use of a larger launching vehicle.

The Soviet flights began with unannounced shots on Sept. 17 and Nov. 2, 1966. Both launching vehicles apparently exploded in orbit, accidentally or on command from the ground.

Since then there have been seven shots, the last on Sept. 16.

### Cosmos Vehicle Orbiting

MOSCOW, Oct. 16 (UPI)—The Soviet Union today put into orbit the 182d unmanned satellite in its Cosmos series of space experiments.